PIRTS

TRAVEL GUIDE

ABC

Pirts is a centuries old Latvian bathing, herbal healing and wellbeing tradition deeply rooted in local nature.

Passed down through generations and included in Latvia's Intangible Cultural Heritage, pirts is a living tradition bringing together inherited knowledge and skills. It is an untranslatable cultural concept – an experience to be felt, lived and remembered.

www.latvia.travel/en

Pirts tradition

An ancient herbal healing ritual, alive today

Pirts has a long history in Latvia. Archaeological evidence dates back to the 11th–14th centuries, while its roots are believed to extend far beyond the surviving historical records.

A rich body of folklore – folk songs, beliefs, incantations and customs – preserves traces of this tradition through generations.

Historically, pirts was far more than a place for bathing. It was a place of cleansing, self-healing and important transitions in human life: children were born there, mothers and newborns were cared for, and people prepared for family rites.

Latvia is unique in keeping this tradition alive in the daily lives of younger generations.

The core

Fire. Water. Plants. Family.

The four essentials –
fire, water, plants, and personal experience -
create the unique spirit of Latvian pirts.

Pirts is often described as a sanctuary for the body, mind and soul. After a pirts ritual, people often say: “I feel as if I’ve been born anew.”

Pirts is as distinctive to Latvian culture as sauna is to Nordics, hammam to Turkey and North Africa, and banya to Slavic cultures.

The guiding principle of Latvian pirts is wellbeing – custom temperature, clothing and, above all, how you experience it. Drawing on the abundance of plants in local meadows and forests, these unique elements come together in a deeply cleansing and restorative experience.

Pirts ABC

The ritual

Pirts is much more than whisking in a warm room – it is a living tradition. Every experience is unique, shaped by the individual, the season and the intention, yet certain stages form the natural rhythm of the ritual.

Heating up

A wood-fired stove heats the stones for several hours before the ritual begins, creating a gentle warmth that usually ranges from 40 to 80°C, depending on the season and intention.

The experience begins with a conversation and hot herbal tea, followed by gradual warming in the pirts – ideally lying on the pirts bench with legs slightly raised. The first steam is traditionally welcomed with a ladle of water poured over the hot stones, carrying a wish or intention for the pirts experience.

Whisking & the green soul of pirts

Moderate heat opens the way for plants to become part of the ritual – from foot baths, scrubs and herbal compresses to traditional leafy whisks (pirts slotas) considered an extension of the pirtnieks hands.

Latvians say: "**keep your head cool and your feet warm**," so particular attention is given to warming the feet while keeping the head cool. Heating and whisking may be repeated, with rest in between, allowing the body to warm gradually and deeply.

Today, additional practices such as massage, sound therapy, phytotherapy, aromatherapy and others may further enrich the experience.

Pirts ABC

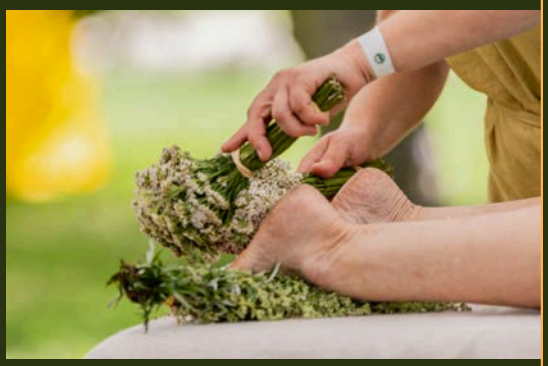
The ritual

Cooling & contrasts

Cooling between stages brings contrast to the deeply warmed body. Fresh air and plenty of clean water at different temperatures are used – from cool showers and natural waters such as ponds, rivers or lakes to snow and ice in winter. The intensity of contrast always depends on individual wellbeing, gently preparing the body for the next stage of the ritual.

Rest & recovery

Rest is an essential part of pirts – between stages and especially at the end. Wrapped warmly, rest on the pirts bench or outside on the grass, enjoying water, herbal tea and light snacks. A honey or berry body mask may complete the ritual, leaving you with a content afterglow and that familiar pirts feeling – "**as if born anew**."



AFTER PIRTS
Drink pure water, choose light, nourishing food and leave alcohol and caffeine for another time. Your body may feel chilly afterwards, so have warm clothes ready – and a pair of woollen socks can be especially comforting for a warm, restful night.

Most authentic pirts experiences are found beyond Riga, surrounded by forests, meadows and water. Let the journey become part of the experience and discover Latvia along the way.

Getting ready

Into the woods and meadows

Whenever possible, let your pirts experience begin in nature. Choose a rural pirts and explore Latvia's forests, meadows or seashore along the way. Or arrange to explore nature together with your pirts specialist (pirtnieks), gathering seasonal plants while preparing for the ritual. This will be a memorable part of your pirts journey.

Plan your journey ahead

Set aside 3–4 hours for an individual or a couple's pirts ritual, plus time for travel and rest before and afterwards. Book well in advance, as authentic pirts experiences take individual preparation and availability can be limited. When booking, check the price, what to bring for your comfort (e.g. your own slippers or swimsuit), and your pirtniek's qualifications and approach to the ritual.

Share any health concerns and discuss what you hope to experience – whether it is discovering the Latvian pirts tradition or allowing yourself to go deeper into a restorative or transformative ritual.

Before you go

A pirts ritual deeply warms the body and promotes sweating, so skip heavy meals right before, but don't arrive hungry. Have a light meal around 2 hours before and stay well hydrated with pure water, avoiding sugary or caffeinated drinks. Alcohol and recreational drugs should never be combined with pirts. If your pirts is far away, consider staying overnight nearby – after deep relaxation, your body will appreciate rest rather than a long drive. Many countryside pirts offer accommodation on site or nearby.

Your comfort comes first

When booking your pirts ritual, it is recommended to check the availability of a male or female pirtnieks according to your preference. Nudity, clothing, touch and personal boundaries can always be discussed openly.

Traditionally, Latvian pirts rituals may be experienced without clothing, but this is always a matter of personal choice. A professional pirtnieks is trained to work respectfully with people of all genders and to maintain professional boundaries at all times. Always feel free to say what feels comfortable for you and what does not.

EXPERIENCE THE PIRTS. Go beyond Riga. Into nature. Into pirts.
Pirts rituals are booked directly with pirts houses rather than through a central booking system. For a professional ritual, look for a pirtnieks who has gained their professional qualification. An individual ritual typically costs around €200–350 per person, depending on its length, setting and intention.

A GROUP PIRTS EXPERIENCE
A small-group pirts experience is a wonderful introduction – a chance to discover the tradition, meet a pirts specialist and feel whether you would like to go deeper with an individual ritual.

WHERE TO EXPERIENCE PIRTS RITUAL
Latvia has many excellent pirts houses. Choose your pirtnieks based on trusted recommendations from guides, tour operators or locals. Here are a few carefully selected English-speaking options to start with:

- **Ziedlejas:** www.ziedlejas.lv
- **Lielzemenes:** www.lielzemenes.lv
- **Mežapuķu pirts:** www.mezapukumedus.lv/pirts
- **Akmeņkalni:** www.akmenkalni.lv
- **Ceriņu pirts:** www.miesaiungaram.lv/pirtnieciba/
- **Meža bites:** www.mezabites.com
- **Deviņspēks:** www.devinspeks.lv

Latvia travel

www.latvia.travel/en

LATVIAN PIRTS

www.latvianpirts.com

LATVJU PIRTS UN SPA ASOCIĀCIJA

www.latvjuPSA.lv